

heroes home, and they welcome them with open arms. Unfortunately, I have seen reports, and I have heard descriptions of instances where landlords would not rent to veterans simply because they served our country in uniform, and I find this practice absolutely unconscionable.

I wish to tell you about the case of SGT Joel Morgan, a combat veteran who bravely served our country in Iraq. Sergeant Morgan, upon leaving the military, wished to rent an apartment in Boston. He found one that he liked.

Unfortunately, after hearing about Sergeant Morgan's service to our country, the landlord said she wouldn't feel comfortable renting the apartment to Sergeant Morgan because she opposed the war in which he fought.

According to Sergeant Morgan, the landlord said:

I would suggest you do the right thing and look for a place less politically active or controversial.

The place where he wanted to live was Boston. This kind of treatment is simply unacceptable to our veterans who have sacrificed so much.

It is a matter of common knowledge that veterans of these recent wars have high unemployment rates, higher than we should accept, higher than is conscionable for this country to accept. Among younger veterans, that unemployment rate is intolerably high, and many landlords may believe that an unemployed veteran simply isn't a good prospect for paying the rent.

My amendment would prohibit any funding in this bill from going to people or organizations that discriminate against veterans in housing. It would allow anyone who sees a discriminatory practice to report it to the Department of Housing and Urban Development and directly to that agency's inspector general. It also allows HUD to continue its existing programs to support veterans and servicemembers.

This amendment will ensure that those who fight for our freedoms will not have to find or fight for a place to call home. Discrimination against anyone, including men and women who have valiantly served, has no place in our Nation.

I look forward to working with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which has done so much to protect Americans from discriminatory housing practices, on ways we can ensure that servicemembers and veterans are not the victims of discrimination. As we work for a permanent solution on so many of these difficult problems—providing veterans with counseling, health care, jobs counseling, training, and education that they need and keeping faith with them so that we leave no veteran behind—we should make sure we leave no veteran out of housing because of discrimination.

One of the solutions will be amending the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to ensure that housing protections are extended to all who have served in uniform. I believe this amendment is an

important step forward. Simply put, it will protect all who have protected our country. Protecting them is a matter of keeping faith and making sure that we leave no veteran behind.

I know the Veterans' Affairs Committee is hard at work on many of these issues. I am proud to serve on that committee and thank Chairman SANDERS for his profoundly important leadership on this issue, along with Ranking Member BURR.

I look forward to extending and expanding these protections for our bravest and finest men and women who have helped to protect our Nation.

I yield the floor.

FEDERAL FUNDING PROHIBITIONS OBJECTION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, consistent with Senate standing orders and my policy of publishing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a statement whenever I place a hold on legislation, I am announcing my intention to object to any unanimous consent request to pass S. 101 Federal funding prohibitions unless it clarifies that it will not prohibit payments under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.

This legislation, as currently drafted, has the potential to impede critical payments to over 700 rural and forested counties all across the United States. Those payments are paid to counties with Federal forest lands under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, and they are part of the Federal Government's guarantee to share funding from the Federal forests with the counties in which those forests are located. Declining receipts spurred the creation of this program to compensate for the loss of receipts from Federal forests. Many counties depend on this funding to pay for schools, roads, and other important county services—including funding search and rescue operations on Federal lands. Particularly in tough economic times, these payments have been a lifeline to many counties. It is not an exaggeration to say that some of these counties might face bankruptcy without these payments. Because of the importance of these payments to many county budgets and the fact that many of them might be in a very vulnerable financial situation without those payments—including several counties in my home State of Oregon—this legislation might very well impact them and prohibit these critical payments. I simply cannot let that happen. This program has consistently received bipartisan support, and it should not be arbitrarily be limited by S. 101.

Therefore, I must object to this legislation moving forward until it is explicitly clarified that it will not block any of these critical payments. Until that occurs, I will object to a unanimous consent request to pass the legislation.

TRIBUTE TO ERNEST CARY BRACE

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today I honor a man whose bravery and sacrifice for this country have had no bounds; a fellow prisoner of war who I am proud to call my friend. This great American hero is Ernest C. Brace, and he was just authorized to be awarded the Purple Heart and Prisoner of War Medal.

Mr. Brace was the longest held civilian prisoner of war in Vietnam, held captive for nearly 8 years. He was captured while serving as a civilian pilot for USAID and assisting Lao Special Forces United, who were organizing the civic action teams for hospitals and supply bases. He was captured by communist forces in Laos in 1965 and held prisoner in the jungle under some of the most horrific conditions imaginable for 3 years until he was moved to a prison camp in North Vietnam. It was there that Ernie and I shared neighboring cells for over a year. Amidst the pain and cruelty of our time together, I also vividly remember our conversations, Sunday night storytelling sessions, and how we kept each other's spirits up during those dark days when our hope never wavered.

After his release, Mr. Brace married a nurse, Nancy, that he met at Naval Medical Center in San Diego, moved to Klamath Falls, OR, and resumed his career as professional aviator. Preceding the Purple Heart and Prisoner of War Medal, Mr. Brace earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, with 3 stars, Navy Unit Commendation, a Distinguished Public Service Medal, a National Defense Service Medal, a Korean Service Medal, with 2 stars, a United Nations Korea Medal, and the Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

I ask you all to join me in congratulating this incredibly brave man and American patriot, my friend Ernie Brace, on this long overdue recognition.

CONSENT TO DISCHARGE AND REFERRAL

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, last week the leadership sought unanimous consent to discharge S. 1294, a bill to designate as wilderness certain public land in the Cherokee National Forest in the State of Tennessee, from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and to rerefer the bill to the Agriculture Committee. I am consenting to this discharge and referral because the wilderness in this bill would be created out of public lands in the Cherokee National Forest, a national forest created from lands acquired under the Weeks Act. The Agriculture Committee has primary jurisdiction for acquired lands forests. However, I am not conceding the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee jurisdiction over national forests created from the public domain or its jurisdiction over our Nation's wilderness system.